



United States Fish and Wildlife Service
Roanoke-Tar-Neuse-Cape Fear
Ecosystem Planning Team

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ECOSYSTEM PLANNING NEWS

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A Summary of Comprehensive Conservation Planning on U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Wildlife Refuges in the Roanoke-Tar-Neuse-Cape Fear Ecosystem of North Carolina and Virginia

NEWS FLASH



The planning team has held public scoping meetings for nine out of the eleven National Wildlife Refuges in the ecosystem. These meetings were an opportunity for the public to tell the refuge and planning

staff what activities and management they would like to see on the refuges. The first four public forums were held in June 2000 for Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge on the Outer Banks of Dare County, North Carolina. In September 2000 two forums were held for Cedar Island National Wildlife Refuge in Carteret County, North Carolina.

Six public forums were held in February for Alligator River, Pocosin Lakes, Mattamuskeet and Swanquarter National Wildlife Refuges. These four refuges are being planned as a group, which we are calling The Peninsula Group, since the refuges share wildlife and personnel and have common habitats on the Albemarle-Pamlico Peninsula.

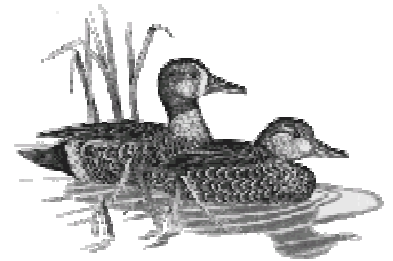
Roanoke River National Wildlife Refuge in Bertie County, North Carolina held two public forums in May. Mackay Island and Currituck National Wildlife Refuges in Currituck County, North Carolina held four public forums in June. The next refuge to hear from the public will be Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

PLANNING PROCESS

Each plan will take about three years to complete. The process begins by summarizing basic resource data for the refuge, a task assigned to each refuge staff.

A first set of public forums called scoping meetings is held to solicit public comments. The comments are then used to help prepare alternative plans. The alternatives are reviewed by several U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service officials in our regional office in Atlanta, Georgia.

Alternatives are presented to the public at a second round of meetings. Public comments on alternatives are considered, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's preferred alternative is developed in a draft plan. That draft plan is reviewed internally by our ecological services, regional and national offices in Raleigh, Atlanta and Washington D.C., respectively.



The draft is presented to the public during a final round of meetings, and copies are made available at local libraries. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will consider all comments on the draft plan and will address significant comments when developing the final plan.

Currently, each public forum is scheduled for three hours: a one-hour open house to view exhibits and talk to refuge staff, a half-hour formal presentation, and a ninety-minute facilitated discussion.

Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge

The first round of public forums for Pea Island was held in June to ask for public input. Four forums were held: two in Rodanthe on the Outer Banks south of the refuge and two in Manteo. Afternoon and evening meetings were held to accommodate everyone's work schedule.

The refuge staff considered the public input in developing three alternative plans for the refuge. Those alternatives were presented at a second round of four meetings in September 2000.

Based on comments from the second round meetings, the staff developed two additional alternative plans to address the potential rerouting of North Carolina Highway 12.

These five alternatives are now being analyzed. The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service refuge staff will select a preferred alternative and develop a draft plan for internal review at regional and national levels. The draft plan will be presented to the public late next year.

Cedar Island National Wildlife Refuge

The first round of public forums for Cedar Island was held in September 2000 to ask for public input. Two forums were held: one in Beaufort and the other on Cedar Island. The Beaufort meeting was held in the afternoon since a number of businesses are located in that area. An evening meeting was held at Cedar Island for local residents.

The refuge staff has just completed developing five alternative plans. Plans were reviewed internally by our regional office in March and April. The U.S Fish and Wildlife Service realty department in the regional office is reviewing land acquisition alternatives.

A second set of public meetings will be scheduled once all reviews have been conducted.

Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge

Alligator River refuge is being planned as part of The Peninsula Group, (see News Flash, page 1). Six public scoping meetings were held in February. One meeting was held in Manns Harbor during the evening.

After the forums, the refuge staff reviewed the comments and developed a vision statement and goals for the refuge. They developed objectives for three alternative plans based on comments from the public and from technical specialists.

The refuge also held a wilderness review with assistance from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service national office. A wilderness review team was assembled and reviewed the entire refuge. It then inventoried the tracts that were large enough to qualify as wilderness study areas (typically areas with no roads or ditches). Each inventory tract was visited to determine the opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation, and its unique natural qualities. Wilderness study areas were created for five areas totaling approximately 38,993 acres as a result of the review. Those areas will be evaluated in the alternative plans and some may be proposed to Congress for official wilderness designation.

A second round of meetings will be scheduled early next year to review the alternative plans.

Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge

Pocosin Lakes refuge is being planned as part of The Peninsula Group (see News Flash, page 1). Six public scoping meetings were held in February. Two of these meetings were held in Plymouth and Columbia during the evening.

Since the forums, the refuge staff has reviewed the comments and developed a vision statement and goals for the refuge. They developed objectives for three alternative plans based on the comments and those of technical specialists outside the refuge staff.

A second round of meetings will be scheduled early next year.

Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuge Swanquarter National Wildlife Refuge

Mattamuskeet and Swanquarter refuges are being planned as part of The Peninsula Group (see News Flash, page 1). Six public scoping meetings were held in February. Since the forums, the refuge staff has reviewed the comments and developed a vision statement and goals for each refuge. They developed objectives for three alternative plans based on the public comments and those of technical specialists outside of the refuge staff.

A second round of meetings will be scheduled early next year to review the alternative plans.



Mackay Island / Currituck National Wildlife Refuge

The first round of public scoping meetings for Mackay Island and Currituck refuges was held in June. The meetings were held in Corolla, Currituck, Knotts Island, and Virginia Beach. A total of sixty-one people attended the four meetings.

There was considerable support for the refuge con-



tinuing and increasing its biological monitoring. The public was concerned about declining water quality in the sound and the role of the refuges in monitoring and con-

tinuously collecting the water quality data.

The public wanted more access to the refuges, but had concerns about providing too much access. They did not want vehicular access to be provided at Currituck refuge.

The participants at both refuge meetings wanted more opportunities for environmental education, hunting and fishing—especially for the youth and the handicapped.

The refuge staff will review the comments later this month and develop alternative plans based on them. A second round of meetings will be scheduled early next year.

Roanoke River National Wildlife Refuge

The first round of public scoping meetings for Roanoke River refuge was held in May. The meetings were held in Windsor and Halifax. A total of thirty-five people attended the two meetings.

There was considerable support for the refuge continuing and increasing its biological monitoring and wildlife surveys. The public was concerned that trends would be hard to track if data were not collected continuously. There were also comments about managed flows and water quality in the river, and the effect each has on wildlife.

The public also requested increased opportunities for environmental education, interpretation, wildlife observation and access to the refuge for canoeists on the river.

The refuge staff will review the comments later this month and develop alternative plans based on them.

A second round of meetings will be scheduled later this year.

Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge

The first round of public scoping meetings for Back Bay refuge will be held early next year. The meetings will be held in Virginia Beach

Personnel Updates

Howard Phillips was selected as manager of Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge in May. Howard had been the manager at Twin Rivers National Wildlife Refuge in Illinois. He had previously been the assistant manager at Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuge.

Buddy Fazio was selected as the new Team Leader of the Red Wolf Recovery Program in Manteo, North Carolina. Buddy was an endangered species biologist in our ecological services office in Ohio.

Keith Watson was hired as the non-game migratory bird biologist with the Wildlife Habitat Management Office in Manteo, North Carolina. Keith will be assisting the refuges and private landowners with management of shorebirds, wading birds, raptors, and neotropical migratory songbirds. He came to the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service from the National Park Service at Cape Hatteras National Seashore.

Ecosystem Planning Staff

Robert Glennon, Resource Conservation Planner

D A Brown, Habitat Protection Biologist

Vicki Waters, Office Automation (Secretary)

Our mission is working with others to conserve , protect, and enhance, fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit to the American people.



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